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Beginnings

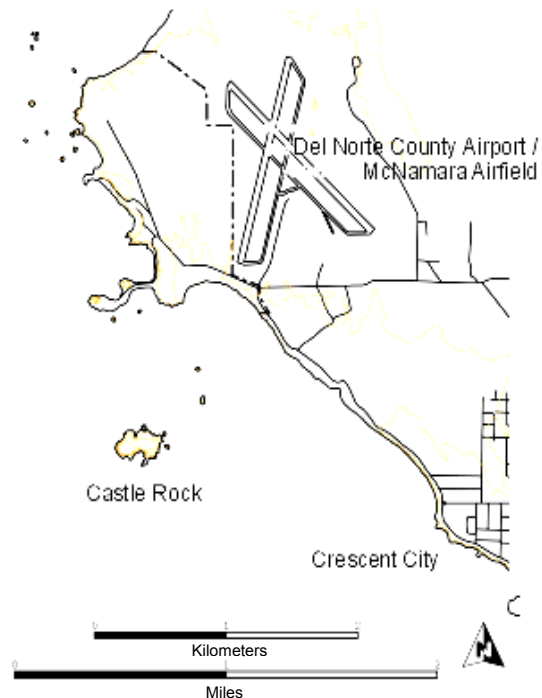
1.1 Del Norte County's Land Acquisition

In 2002, the County of Del Norte, acting in the public interest, acquired approximately 339 acres of privately owned land from a willing seller at Point Saint George – the westernmost promontory in the northernmost county in California. Many agencies, organizations, and individuals contributed to the acquisition effort.

This scenic coastal headland, located immediately northwest of Crescent City and adjacent to the Del Norte County Airport/McNamara Airfield, contains an impressive variety of natural and cultural resources of regional and statewide significance. It is replete with native plants and wildlife, including a substantial number of rare species; the area contains a diverse assemblage of unusual habitats and an array of wetland types. Once the home of ancestors of the Tolowa Indians, this headland is one of the earliest human-occupied areas along the northwestern California coast and an area of significant meaning to local Tribes. The historic Point St. George Reef Lighthouse is located six miles offshore.

Point St. George is a popular coastal access point for area residents and visitors. While in private ownership, portions of the headland property were used for cattle grazing as part of a ranching operation; other places on the property were also used on an informal basis by the public. Recreational activities and public use continue into the present and include bird

**Point Saint George
Location Map**



Beginnings

watching, clamming and fishing, surfing, beach-combing, walking and hiking, botanizing, and nature study.

The County's land acquisition at Point St. George was made possible through financial assistance from the Wildlife Conservation Board, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the State Coastal Conservancy through the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000. The grant from the Coastal Conservancy included funding to prepare this management plan.

1.2 Why Do We Need a Management Plan?

The need for public agency action to resolve resource protection and public access issues at Point St. George has been recognized for many years. Since 1983, the Point St. George area has remained an uncertified segment of the County of Del Norte's Local Coastal Plan (LCP); the area was identified in the LCP as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems. A management plan is an important step toward restoring local coastal jurisdiction for this area.

Management of County lands at Point St. George is currently governed by policy statements in the County's 2003 General Plan, which includes a requirement to prepare a management plan. This Management Plan is consistent with General Plan policies.

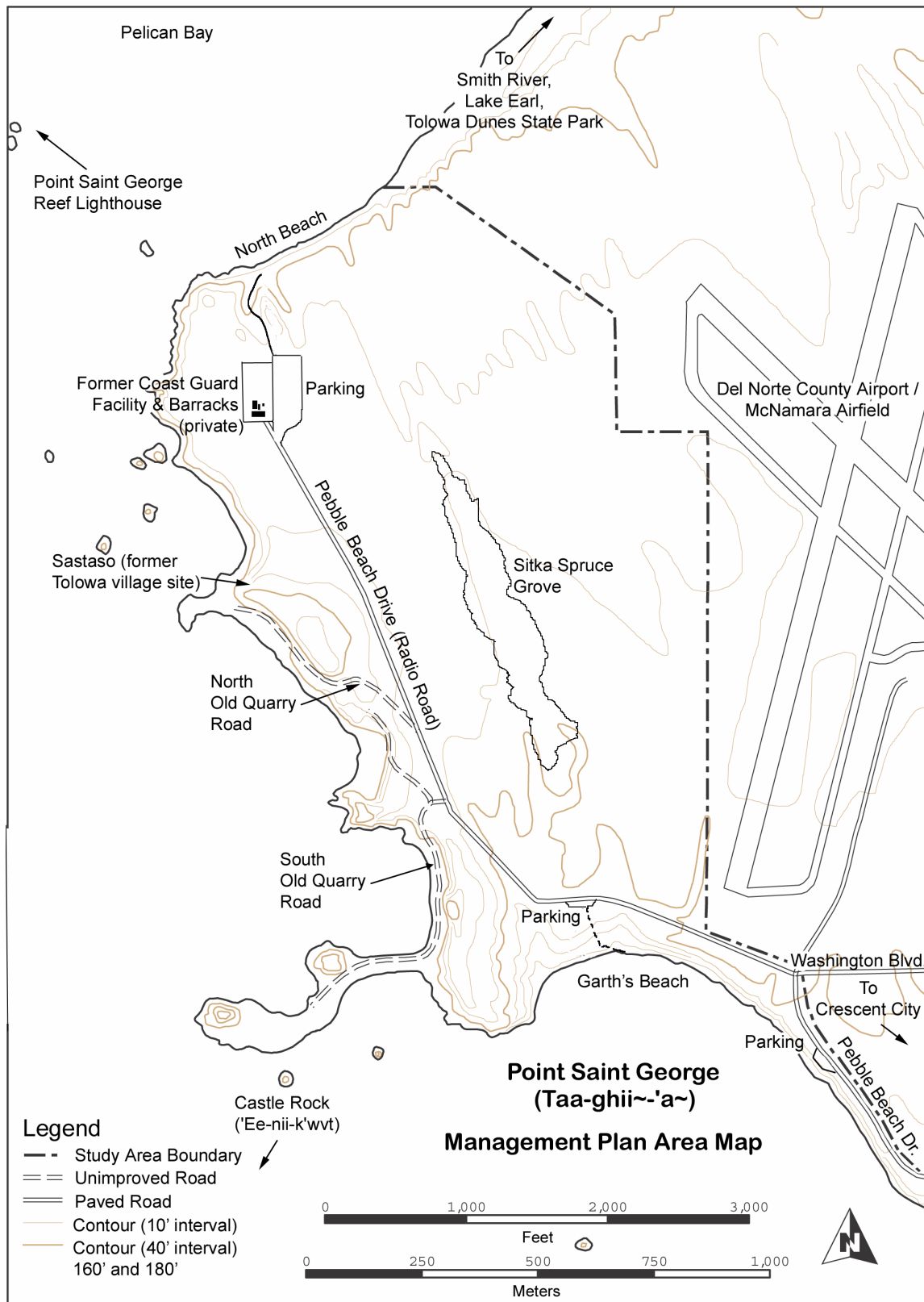
A management plan is required as part of the acquisition of this property. It provides a public statement regarding future activities on the site; thus, a management plan helps to facilitate future regulatory reviews by local, state, and federal agencies with jurisdiction over specific resources or uses.

Del Norte County General Plan (Policy 5.A.14)

"The County owned lands at Pt. St. George lying west of the airport shall be managed by the County or its designee for the purposes of habitat protection and restoration, cultural resource preservation and interpretation, public access, open space, and safety buffer for the County's only commercial airport (Jack McNamara Field). A management plan shall be prepared for the property compatible with the purposes listed including agricultural leasing and an interpretive center. Funding for the management plan and implementation of the recommendations of the plan will be sought from a variety of public and private sources."

Ownership by the County also means more local control than under state or federal ownership. A management plan for Point St. George is needed to ensure that future generations of residents and visitors may also enjoy this scenic coastal headland – and to ensure that, in the meantime, we manage the site properly and do not "love it to death."

Point St. George Management Plan

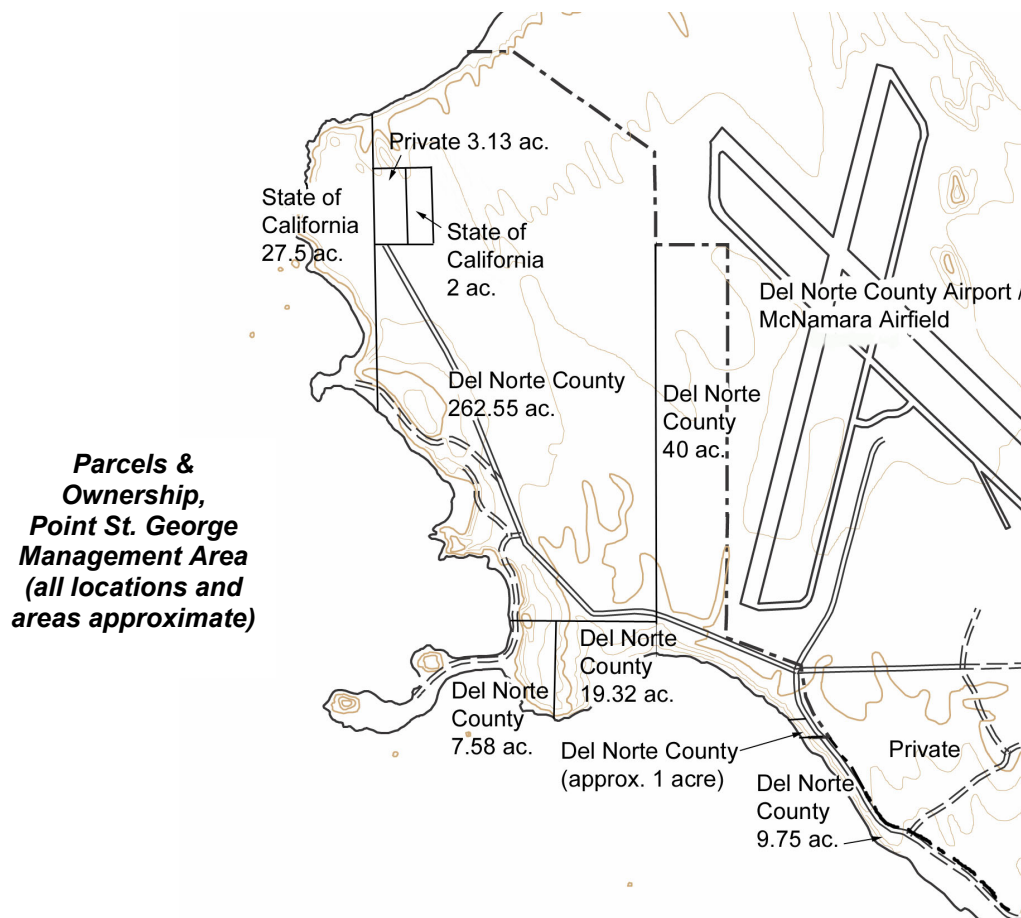


Beginnings

Acquisition of the property and preparation of this management plan also safeguards the operations at the County's only commercial airport. Ownership and management of the land directly adjacent to the airport allows the County to maintain the required aircraft clear zones and safety areas.

1.3 The Planning Area

The total planning area for this Management Plan is approximately 370 acres. The property acquired by the County consists of a total of approximately 339 acres in six parcels, which are located northwest of Crescent City, directly east and adjacent to the Del Norte County Airport/McNamara Airfield, and extending south along Pebble Beach Drive.



In addition to the County property, the plan area includes a 27.5-acre parcel owned by the State located on the westernmost side of the headland. The state also has ownership of the 2-acre parking area at the end of Pebble Beach Drive/Radio Road. The plan area does not include the former U.S. Coast Guard facility, which is in private ownership.

1.4 Required Management Guidelines

The terms and conditions of the state grants (i.e., from the State Coastal Conservancy and the California Wildlife Conservation Board) identified the purposes for acquisition of the property by a public agency and the conditions under which the County is to use, maintain, and manage the property. In summary, these purposes and conditions are:

- Protection and interpretation of natural resources;
- Wildlife habitat preservation, restoration, and management;
- Wildlife-oriented education and research;
- Preservation, management, and interpretation of cultural resources; and
- Compatible public access and uses and open space protection as may be consistent with the other purposes.¹

The Point St. George Management Plan adopts these purposes as the overarching guidelines for resource management and public access at the site. One condition of the State Coastal Conservancy grant also prohibits the use of the property for mitigation (i.e., to compensate for adverse effects to the environment elsewhere) without the written permission of the Conservancy's Executive Officer.

1.5 The Plan Development Process

This Management Plan represents the efforts of a number of stewardship partners, including local, state, and federal agencies, local Native American Tribal groups, and members of the public, in developing a framework to guide the future of Point St. George. It is the first phase of what will be an ongoing stewardship responsibility; future management directions for the Point St. George site will require additional efforts by resource managers, as well as deliberations involving the County Board of Supervisors and other parties.

Development of this plan has been overseen by the Point St. George Management Plan Steering Committee. Members of this committee, appointed by the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors, represented the public interest inherent in various aspects of the site through their agency, organization, or Tribal affiliations and interests.

¹ Summarized from: Standard Agreement Contract Number 02-015 between the State of California, Coastal Conservancy, and the County of Del Norte for the Point St. George Acquisition; the Coastal Conservancy's Point St. George Enhancement Plan, April 25, 2002; and the California Wildlife Conservation Board Grant Agreement, August 28, 2002.

Beginnings

Technical aspects of the planning process began with background studies and resource assessments, which supplemented and updated previous studies that had been conducted at the site. These summary resource evaluations provided information that allowed the Steering Committee and the County's planning team to identify constraints and opportunities that might affect management activities at the site.

Public participation in conjunction with Steering Committee guidance were important elements in the planning process. Early in the process, the input took the form of "visions" of Point St. George in the future; later, members of the public and the Steering Committee also provided comments on early versions of the draft plan. Summaries of the comments and discussions from the two public Community Meetings are presented in the appendices.

The Steering Committee considered various possible activities and management alternatives, some of which were selected for further development in the plan. Following additional reviews and guidance from the Steering Committee and the public, the planning process for the Management Plan concluded with an assessment of possible phasing, priorities, funding sources, and future tasks.

Although the list of steps described here suggests a sequential process, development of the Management Plan was iterative, as new ideas and input were incorporated as they occurred.

1.6 A "Living" Document

Monitoring and evaluation are part of the planning process – the continuing efforts of "adaptive management." This Management Plan is intended to be a living document, which is reviewed and updated periodically as additional information becomes available, as additional public or agency needs are identified, or as management objectives shift. This Management Plan and any subsequent changes will be subject to review and approval by the County Board of Supervisors.

Point St. George Management Plan

Elements of This Phase 1 Planning Process

- Conduct technical background studies and resource evaluations.
- Characterize the resources and identify management constraints.
- Invite "visions" of what the site should look like in the future.
- Develop preliminary recommendations and management alternatives.
- Incorporate public comments and agency reviews.
- Identify specific management actions and preferred alternatives.
- Assess phasing and priorities; identify possible funding sources; identify future planning tasks.
- Implement plan, monitor, and adapt.

1.7 Vision Statement

Imagine Point St. George in the Future

Bearing in mind the many resources and constraints at the site,

- What should the public property at Point St. George look like ten or fifteen years from now?
- What are the “best” ways to achieve the necessary balance between resource protection and public access?
- What management goals would lead the County and participating agencies toward that future?
- What improvements, conservation measures, or other management activities would you suggest to lead us toward that future?

Questions like these were the subject of many discussions by the public, the participating agencies, and the Steering Committee. Responses to these questions paint an interesting – if idealistic – picture, which is summarized below. This “vision” of Point St. George in the future is multi-faceted and full of possibilities; while containing many feasible elements, it is also, as a whole, impossible to achieve. Plans, however, must have beginnings.

(Photo copyright © 2002-2003 Kenneth Adelman, California Coastal Records Project, www.californiacoastline.org.)



Aerial View of Point St. George, Looking Southeast.

Beginnings

An Ideal, Composite Vision

In the ideal future, the Point St. George site is a multiple-use area, serving visitors and local residents alike. It serves as a gateway to other areas in the region, including state lands to the north.

The property is not over-developed; there are just the right number of visitor services, designated trails, and paved areas. An equitable method for controlling the number of visitors allows just the right number, which is within the “carrying capacity” of the property. There is attractive fencing and other non-obtrusive, low barriers to keep vehicles on the roads and in parking areas. The existing turnouts have been improved. Illegal off-road travel has been curtailed. Vandalism is not a problem.

One main trail follows the blufftop parallel to the shoreline, with connections to parking areas, the beach, and other locations of public use. Trail surfaces are natural or minimally improved with permeable materials; they are completely consistent with the level of foot traffic, and there is no problem with surface erosion.

Sensitive natural resources are fully protected. Habitat enhancement is successful in restoring rare species; intrusive, exotic plants are being replaced by native species. Controlled cattle grazing is practiced as a management technique to maintain sensitive species habitat, plant communities, and biodiversity in general. Sensitive plant species, including the endangered western lily, have achieved recovery-level populations. Just the right areas are grazed on a rotational basis, and other areas are appropriately excluded. The abundant wetlands on the site function beautifully. Management activities have created grassy areas that provide forage for large flocks of Aleutian Canada geese, thus reducing the pressure on private grazing lands. Effective wildlife management prevents any issues at the airport.

Cultural resources are fully protected and preserved. There is an active interpretation program that celebrates the rich heritage of the Tolowa people and provides accurate information about local Native American history and culture to the public. There is an inconspicuous interpretive center and a “living museum” that includes a reconstruction of a Tolowa village. The cultural center houses materials that have been returned from outside the area. There is occasional, private use of the property by Native Americans for traditional and ceremonial purposes. An on-site caretaker helps to prevent abuses of the property.

The beach is fully accessible to the public for beachcombing and a wide variety of recreational uses. Surfers have access to the major surfing breaks. There are bird-watching and botanical tours, identified locations where birdwatchers can set up viewing scopes, and pamphlets for self-guided nature trails. A segment of the California Coastal Trail passes through the property, linking to other segments on the north and south.

Point St. George Management Plan

All construction at Point St. George is sensitive to the beauty and openness of the site. The property continues to be highly scenic; no additional structures or improvements are visible from offshore. Non-essential antennas have been removed; those that are necessary have been relocated and are no longer conspicuous. There are new trash and recycling receptacles, public restroom facilities, and public telephones. All improvements are inexpensive and require only minimal maintenance.

An active “Friends Group” helps to monitor public use and performs other volunteer functions, including serving in an advisory function to assist the County with management issues. Law enforcement agencies understand the importance of protecting this property and patrol the site regularly. There is cooperation among all agencies.



***The Natural Beauty of the Point St. George Site is Evident
in this Northeasterly View across a Mosaic of Vegetation Types.***

